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AIR FORCE POTENTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR LANDFILL CONTAMINATION

SPOKANE -- The Department of Ecology has told Fairchild Air Force Base it could be held responsible for some of the contamination at the Colbert Landfill.

Solvent-contaminated ground water from the 40-acre site which is located north of Spokane, has spread to surrounding neighborhoods. Water supplies of nearly 200 families are affected. Because of the contamination, Colbert was added to the federal "Superfund" list, making it a top priority for cleanup.

A property owner, site operator or anyone taking hazardous wastes to a contaminated site can be held liable for cleaning it up.

"We sent them a letter outlining how the law works and naming them as a potentially responsible party," said Mike Blum, project manager. Fairchild has been given 60 days to respond to the notice.

In May 1986, both Spokane County and the Key Tronic Corporation were named by the state as potentially responsible parties for contamination and cleanup.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also sent Fairchild Air Force Base a notice letter in 1984 naming them liable under federal law as well.

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Other companies also may have sent chemicals to the landfill before it was shut down in 1986. EPA will begin a search for other potentially responsible parties. The search will be finished by mid-October.

Ecology and EPA currently are working to finalize which method will be used to clean up the site. Following a decision, negotiations with the potentially responsible parties on the work agenda will begin.